



## T H E M I L I T A R Y C O A L I T I O N

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April 15, 2003

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Leahy:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of nationally prominent uniformed services and veterans organizations representing more than 5.5 million current and former members of the seven uniformed services, plus their families and survivors, would like to thank you for introducing S. 852 the National Guard and Reserve Comprehensive Health Benefits Act of 2003. This important legislation would offer members of the Selected Reserve and their families the opportunity to participate in the Tricare program on a cost-share basis; provide a partial subsidy of private health insurance premiums for family members of Guardsmen and Reservists who wish to retain their private health insurance; and improve transition coverage upon demobilization. This initiative to improve healthcare readiness for members of the National Guard and Reserve components and their families is at the forefront of TMC's priorities for that community.

The National Guard and Reserve components' contributions to the ongoing operations in Iraq, fighting the global war on terrorism, protecting the homeland, and supporting contingency operations around the world are key indicators of the importance of maintaining a high level of readiness. The General Accounting Office recently found more than 21 percent of National Guard and Reserve members do not have health coverage. Forty percent of those individuals without insurance are in the junior enlisted ranks.

Providing Tricare during all phases of service can decrease an already lengthy mobilization process by ensuring medical readiness is routinely sustained. Medical readiness is a critical factor in mission readiness.

Recent National Guard and Reserve mobilizations have demonstrated how quickly these forces can be ready to fulfill their war-fighting mission. Some notifications for mobilization have given Guardsmen and Reservists hours and days, rather than weeks and months once required. This reduced alert ramp also requires members of the Guard and Reserve to maintain their family readiness plans in order to lessen the complications and distractions during deployments. Providing continuity of health coverage for family members will ensure those who support our service members and make it possible for them to serve, are provided for while their loved ones are away.

The Military Coalition supports S.852 and applauds your efforts to ensure a strong and viable National Guard and Reserve as an integral component of our nation's total force.

Sincerely,

The Military Coalition  
(Signatures Enclosed)

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Air Force Association

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